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ADVOCATE OF PEACE.

SEPTEMBER, 1854.

BALANCE OF POWER.

Every student of international law, or of modern history, is quite familiar with this phrase; but it is impossible to tell precisely what it means, and sufficiently amazing to hear grave statesmen talk stale, pompous nonsense about it. Passing events force it so constantly upon our attention, that we have taken some pains to collect a few extracts, with a hint or two of our own, upon the subject.

Lord Bacon's Conception of it.—"Princes should keep due sentinel, lest their neighbors do overgrow so (by increase of territory, by embracing of trade, by approaches, and the like,) as they become more able to annoy them, than they were;" or, in plain English, should strive to keep others from becoming more prosperous and more powerful than themselves. He illustrated his view of it by saying, that "during the triumvirate of Kings. Henry VIII. of England, Francis I. of France, and the Emperor Charles V., there was such a watch kept, that none of the three could win a palm of ground, but the other two would straightway balance it, either by confederation, or, if need were, by war."

Views of Recent Writers.—"If a European State," says the North British Review, "should attempt by unlawful enterprises to attain a degree of power which enables it to defy the danger of a union of several of its neighbors, or even by an alliance of the whole, such a State should be treated as a common enemy. If, on the other hand, it had acquired that degree of force by an accidental concurrence of circumstances, and without any acts of violence, whenever it should furnish a just occasion, no means which political wisdom could devise for the purpose of diminishing its power, should be neglected or untried; for it is a principle of the European federal system, properly understood, that no one of its members should ever become so powerful as to be able to coerce all the rest put together. It is desirable for the interests of humanity and civilization, that any State which infringes the balance, should be coerced either by the collective strength of the European family, or by an union of two or more States."

The Westminster Review, however, pours contempt on this figment of modern diplomacy:—"The system, as hitherto understood, is, in reality, a piece of political machinery, constructed on the assumption of the universal

selfishness of men, and entirely overlooking the rights of peoples. It dictates: 'We choose to have Turkey strong, we will, therefore, put down the Pasha of Egypt; or, We choose to have Austria strong, we, therefore, will not listen to the just complaints of Hungary.' . . . Based, as it is, on no profound principle, it can only be regarded as of a transitory nature, and will probably pass away with the national and political circumstances out of which it originated; while the objects which it was intended to secure, will doubtless be attained by some other and more satisfactory means."

There are some facts on this subject worthy of serious attention.—1. The system, if such it can be called, is essentially, if not intensely, selfish. It teaches one set of men, for their own interests alone, to injure another.

2. It is the tool of rulers, an engine wielded for their own aggrandizement or safety, in disregard of the people's wishes or interests. It is a device, for their own benefit, of men who claim from God a hereditary right to rule; a right to wrest the vast and potent machinery of government, and the hard earnings of the people, not for the good of the latter as their grand object, but for their own selfish ends. "In all the dishonest intrigues and desolating wars in which Europe has been involved in support of this theory, the sole object has been the interests and honor of some half-a-dozen royal dynasties. If any one doubts this, let him cast his eyes over European history for the last three centuries. What were the sanguinary wars which laid waste Italy and Germany and all the other countries of central Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but struggles for predominance among the rival houses of Hapsburgh, of Bourbon, of Vasa, of Brandenburg? The people, indeed, whom the princes find it always so easy to gull, imagined that they were fighting for religion or for liberty; but with the dynasties these were mere pretexts for the accomplishment of their own ambitious purposes of personal or family aggrandizement. But this is most fully brought out by the acts of those great political conferences, expressly and avowedly convened for adjusting the balance of power, such as the Congress of Westphalia in 1648, and the Congress of Vienna in 1815. What took place at the former? 'After having been balancing their armies and their treasures against each other for many years,' says Dr. Solger, 'and each power having found it impossible to appropriate the whole, (of Germany,) an understanding was at length effected that the three powers should go shares. Thus the house of Bourbon obtained the German province of Alsace, and the house of Hapsburg the province of Bohemia, and the house of Vasa the greater part of Pomerania, whilst their respective allies amongst the German princes obtained by stipulation a proportionate increase of territory. On the whole, 140 pieces of land were in this manner parcelled out among the contracting parties at the peace of Westphalia, that is, other parties were despoiled of 140 pieces of land, to satisfy the greediness of those who had the greatest number of troops in the field, or employed the greatest skill in out-witting their colleagues at the diplomatic conferences. . . . This was the first General Congress of all the European Princes, at which it was established as a principle, that the greater dynasties might, by common agreement, enlarge, or curtail, or entirely abolish, the

small ones, and might dispose of the countries and peoples of Europe amongst themselves as so much property." Precisely the same process was repeated, as our readers too well know, at the Congress of Vienna. And what at this moment is the pretext employed for suppressing the aspirations of the Continental people for liberty and independence? Why, the balance of power. Why must not Hungary be free? Because that would rob the House of Hapsburgh of a part of its inheritance, and, by enfeebling the Austrian Empire, disturb the European equilibrium. But, on the other hand, why is a French army marched into Rome? Because Austria was in danger of acquiring an undue preponderance in Italy."

3. It assumes, as its basis, the essential antagonism of nations, and rests on the axiom of Montaigne, three centuries ago, "that the loss of one nation is the profit of another;"—a doctrine, tolerable perhaps, in a semi-barbarous age, but utterly abhorrent to the spirit of the present day, and to the whole genius of Christianity.

4. This balance of power has occasioned nearly all the great wars of modern Europe. We have no space to illustrate this position; but its truth glares upon us from the crimsoned pages of modern history for some three centuries.

5. The world has outgrown this system. If suited to its actual wants in any age, it is out of place amid the new agencies, relations and circumstances of the present day. "The diplomatists of Vienna are unconscious, to this very day, that the progress of the United States of America—the opening of the Chinese empire—the rapid rise of California and Australia—the incredible facility of communication, and the progress of science and enlightenment—must, sooner or later, break through their treaties, and make their efforts to balance the world upon their basis simply ridiculous. Yes, in an age which, instead of king-worship, has seen almost all the sovereigns of Europe fugitives from their own dominions, when the aspirations of popular liberty have become universal, when knowledge and a daring spirit of inquiry have inspired the masses every where with the consciousness of their own importance, when the industrial and commercial element has grown to such prodigious dimensions as utterly to outweigh the military, when the question which ferments the *people* of Europe is not the aggrandizement of empires, but the independence of oppressed nationalities, when social and political problems of new and awful significance are on all hands pressing for solution, when nations are daily drawn together into closer relations of intercourse and dependence, and new worlds beyond the ocean have been brought so near as to affect most vitally our own European orbit—in such a state of things as this, we repeat, our statesmen still complacently dream that they can govern the universe by virtue of the same barren fiction as their predecessors did three centuries ago."

WHAT BECOMES OF SOLDIERS.—In two or three years after the close of the Mexican War, it was stated in a N. Y. paper, that of the 1000 men who formed the New York regiment in the Mexican war, only *sixty* were alive, and but about forty then able to earn their living.